

# DRAMATICS

An Educational Magazine for Directors, Teachers, and Students of Dramatic Arts

Vol. XXX, No. 6

MARCH, 1959

50c Per Copy



The Madwoman of Chaillot, Troupe 391, Miami Beach, Fla., Sr. High School, Walter A. Rock, Sponsor

## INTERNATIONAL THEATER CELEBRATION 1959

By ALICE GRIFFIN

## A PLAY PUBLISHER SPEAKS

By SHERMAN L. SERGEL

## DRAMA — LIAISON BETWEEN SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

By MAYBELLE GINGER

## PAGEANT COMMITTEES AT WORK

By CHARLES R. TROMBO and POLLYANN

## HAVE PAINTBRUSH — WILL TRAVEL

By CORINNE FISCHER

# DEAR PHOEBE

By Tom Taggart and James Reach

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Impetus for the hilarious, madcap complications that ensue is provided by a letter that arrives for Aunt Phoebe from Rochelle Mignonne, a "French chantoosey" with a Bronx accent. Rochelle has evidence implicating night club owner Big Joe Moroni in a sports-fix scandal, and Bill, with Mickey's help, goes after the story. To do so, he has to dress up as "Aunt Phoebe"—and then things really start popping. Almost under the noses of Bill and Mickey, Rochelle is murdered, and they have to solve her killing before the next morning's deadline. Of course, virtue—and true love—triumph in the end, but not before the audience has been regaled by a number of the most side-splitting scenes that ever rocked a theatre with laughter.

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## In this Issue

**CORINNE FISCHER**, a Thespian of Troupe 322, Clayton, Mo., High School, Blandford Jennings, Sponsor, will make you chuckle as you read her article, *Have Paintbrush—Will Travel*. Here is a student's viewpoint about all that "backstage drudgery." Hard work, yes, but it's fun—and the "pride that bursts forth" when one sees his paint job on production night!

**T**HROUGHOUT this month schools everywhere will observe International Theater Celebration whose theme this year is the Latin American countries. Many of our Thespian affiliated schools will take part in this observance of international good will and understanding. Alice Griffin, Associate Chairman, ITC, New York City, in her article, *International Theater Celebration, 1959*, "hopes that the high schools will be playing an even larger part [in this celebration] in the years to come"—and so do I.

**I**N traveling about the country I always hear criticism of the caliber of plays published today, the offensive themes of most Broadway plays, the cost of play books and the increase of royalty fees—the poor play selections of the high school theaters—that I concluded that it was about time to hear from the play publishers, who have been taking most of the "below-the-belt" blows. I thus asked Sherman L. Sergel of the Dramatic Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, to explain his side of the story. He responded by submitting the article, *A Play Publisher Speaks*.

**M**AYBELLE Conger, Oklahoma state director for The National Thespian Society and sponsor of Troupe 822, Central High School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, is my kind of play director and Thespian Sponsor. After you have read her article, *Drama—Liaison between School and Community*, you will understand why. Would that all high school play directors practiced her philosophy! The sputniks, muttniks, moonniks do not bother Miss Conger.

**"A**MERICANS are not a theater conscious, a theater loving people." "The time to start to develop the habit of theater going is with the very young..." "If Thespians in all the troupes across the country would for one year seriously... provide just one good play for the children of the community, there would be no serious problem about restoring the habits of theater-going..." These thought provoking sentences from Frieda Reed's article, subtitled *Let's Take the Long View*, command your reading the entire Children's Theater article.

**P**AGEANT Committees at Work is the title of Mr. Trumbo's sixth article on Pageantry; *The Musical Play: Part I*, Dr. Dusenbury's sixth article on the American Musical Theater since 1920. *The Avenging Eye*, *A Doll's House*, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, and *George*

*Washington Slept Here* are Dr. Blank's four Plays of the Month.

**M**OST of the books brief reviewed this month by Prof. Friederich are on acting, especially "the method." The reviews are longer than usual due to the importance of the subject. Prof. Friederich states in his letter to me: "I feel that of all the phases of theater, acting, followed by directing, cuts across all lines and affects more of our readers than any other phases. This fact, together with all the confusion that exists about acting theories, especially "the method," makes me feel that I should go into greater detail about these books on acting and directing."

**T**HESPIAN Chatter, Thespians in Action (Pictorial), Regional Conferences, Broadway Line-up, and Coming Your Way complete this month's issue. Good Reading!

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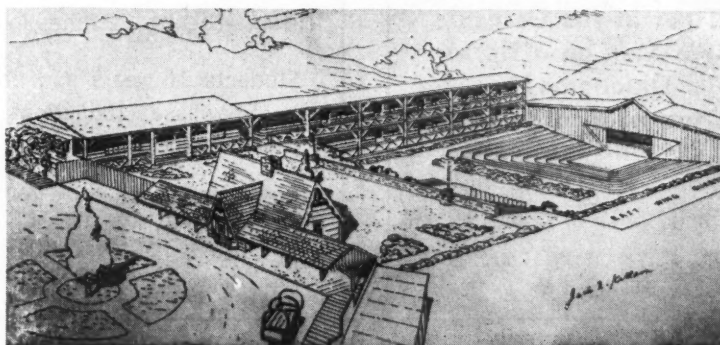
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Way back when I was a mere sophomore I tremulously signed my "John Hancock" to a piece of paper on the bulletin board in room 102. And that started me on my whirlwind life in the theater. You notice that I said *in* the theater, not *on* the stage. Besides the fact that I have a nauseous fear of acting (due to an unfortunate mishap — forgetting my one line in a second grade play), I am a firm believer that without the crews a play would fall apart. And I mean that literally — scenery has the horrible habit of falling down at the least slam of a door.

I am one of the behind-the-scenes men who are the very backbone of the theater. My special field happens to be that of painting artistic (or otherwise — usually otherwise) scenery. I'm a swash-buckling, paint-slinging member of every Paint Crew — every Paint Crew that hasn't heard of my habit of knocking over full paint buckets, that is. And I sport all the special characteristics of the profession too: definite yellow splatters behind my ears and on my elbows, brown paint impregnated in my fingernails, a pair of multi-colored bluejeans with a splattered-to-match shirt, and apple green paint hopelessly ground into the soles of my feet.

It is common knowledge that all great artists can create masterpieces only when attired correctly: a long white (at least in the beginning it is white) shirt, preferably ten sizes too large; a pair of jeans, preferably the right size, or smaller; and bare feet is the accepted apparel for a Paint Crew member. This garb is not only comfortable, but also very sensible because of the messy nature of the job.

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## HAVE PAINTBRUSH — WILL TRAVEL

By CORINNE FISCHER

As in any other skilled profession, one must learn by experience. No book could ever find suitable (or printable) words to describe the queer (and somewhat disagreeable) sensation of stirring a gallon of lumpy paint with your hands. Or to describe accurately the heart-rending sorrow which is experienced upon discovering that the paint is chipping off the best flat you have painted all week. Or to describe the feeling of uncontrollable anger one gets when he sees the hero of the play walk up and down the freshly-painted white steps with muddy shoes. And so, to learn the skill of remaining sane throughout all these calamities, one must become an apprentice to the trade. Apprentices learn to do such things as clean paint brushes, stir glue, mix paint, lift flats, and **KEEP STILL!** (The last is an essential part of being liked by the crew head — especially when what you are saying is "I told you that flat was supposed to be red instead of green.")

After an apprenticeship of two or three play crews, one usually gets the chance to be the "big boss" — that is, the crew head. Figuring out how much paint to order is the first hurdle to be jumped by the crew head. But the really big job is keeping peace among the other members of the crew. Controlling the paint-thirsty mob of apprentices who want to be painting every minute of every hour — especially when there are only half as many paint brushes as

painters — requires a level head and a lot of fast talking. Keeping track of Dramatic Guild points and of the scenery blueprint is the only paper work involved; the rest is all muscle and sweat. Even in the most smoothly-run crews, however, small technical difficulties arise, such as painting the right flat the wrong color (or vice versa), or painting four doors and three windows when what was needed was three doors and four windows. Having been an apprentice once, the crew head knows from past experience how to cope with these problems: give out a good scream (this clears the head and allows room for real thinking), throw up your hands in despair, start over, and forget the past. Being a crew head is a wonderful experience!

You think our world is becoming crowded? Just take a peek at the workroom a week before curtain time. Most likely you will find both the Paint and the Stage crews (bitter enemies) working feverishly (probably on the same flat) to finish on time. This internal strife between the two crews might be compared to the strife which is going on right now between the different divisions of our armed forces in trying to perfect a rocket. They are all working toward the same goal, but feel that their way is the only way. In this case, the tools have been reduced to paint and nails.

All hindrances having been satisfactorily conquered, the Paint Crew always has the scenery ready by the technical rehearsal. At this rehearsal a few minor improvements (such as repainting that "little" spot — two feet square — in the middle of the back wall) are made and the pails and brushes are washed out for the last time and hung on their respective hooks. The Paint Crew becomes inactive — but only until the next production.

Oh! the pride that bursts forth from each member of the crew when he sits in the audience the nights of the play and is able to point out to the person sitting next to him that that porthole or door or window up there is the one HE painted!

Now, aren't you sorry you haven't joined the Dramatic Guild yet? Room 102 is straight down the hall . . . have fun!!

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NEIL HAMILTON, perennially popular matinee idol, starred recently in Pasadena Playhouse comedy hit, "The Happiest Millionaire." Cast as his two sons were College of Theatre Arts students Jan Stine and Malcolm Cassell who, under Hamilton's inspiration, received fine reviews from West Coast critics. Because of instruction in sound theory and the chance to work with experienced actors, the dramatic training of these students has been both practical and thorough. Both boys are now in demand with Hollywood producers.

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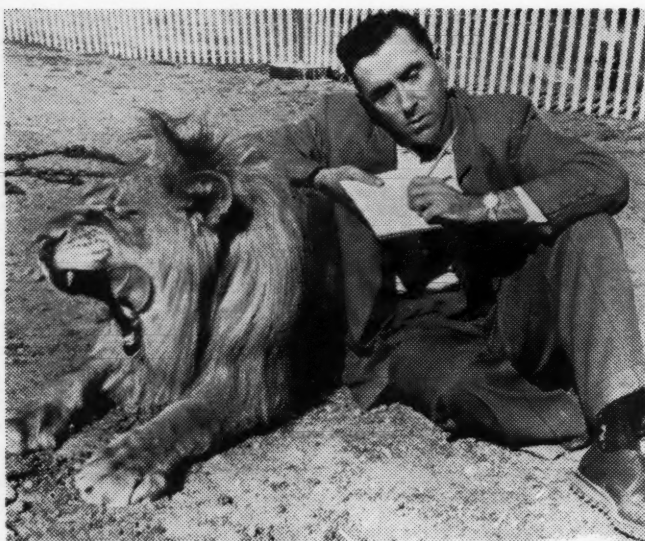
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N. J. playwright, Ken Parker, shown here with his pet lion, "Elvis," is winner of this year's National Fellowship Play Award.

## As I See It . . .

### 33,000 COLLEGE OPENINGS UNFILLED LAST FALL

OVER 33,000 freshmen opening in some 300 colleges and universities went begging last fall, it was revealed recently by the editors of *Changing Times*, *The Kiplinger Magazine*, after an exclusive nationwide poll of the country's four-year accredited colleges and universities. At present, the much-talked about academic squeeze is being felt by only about 50 colleges, the survey showed. Most of these seats of learning are long famous for their prestige and selectivity.

A sharp rise in the number of applicants is expected next fall, but many good accredited colleges will be able to take all qualified youngsters who apply for several years to come. The real pinch in freshmen classes is expected in 1964, although many academic institutions are preparing for this expected student tidal wave with new building programs.

### CARNEGIE INSTITUTE RECEIVES \$5,000,000 ENDOWMENT

TRUSTEES of the A. W. Mellon Educational and Charitable Trust have provided an endowment of \$5,000,000 to strengthen the faculty of the College of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute of Technology.

In a joint announcement from the university, Board Chairman James M. Bovard and President J. C. Warner saw the grant as "opening new directions in creating a center for educational and creative achievement in the fine arts."

Forerunner of the gift was a comprehensive study of the objectives and development of the College of Fine Arts which was financed by a grant of \$26,000 from the trust in 1953. Today's grant of \$5,000,000 climaxes this five year study.

### SCHOLARSHIPS: \$100 to \$1500 ANNUALLY

THE National Merit Scholarship Corporation founded in 1955 on grants of \$20,000,000 by the Ford Foundation and \$500,000 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York has announced that the winners of the Merit Scholarships for 1958-59 can expect a minimum award of \$100 a year or a maximum of \$1,500. Each scholarship awarded in this nationwide search for able high school students carries a stipend based on the need of each individual winner, and is renewable annually without further

competitive examination. Merit Scholarships are provided by some eight corporations, foundations, professional societies, and individuals, as well as the National Merit Scholarship Corporation itself. Further details about this annual competition for scholarships can be obtained by writing to the following address: National Merit Scholarship Corporation, 1580 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois.

### A WORKSHOP IN THEATER LIBRARIANSHIP

THE first course in theater librarianship to be given in any American library school is being offered by Columbia University's School of Library Service in its coming summer session. The Theater Library Association is sponsoring the new course. As its instructor the school has been fortunate in securing the services of George Freedley, organizer of the New York Public Library's Theater Collection more than a quarter of a century ago and its Curator since 1958.

The course is designed for librarians now in charge of theater collections, for library students preparing for professional service in this field, as well as for graduate students in drama who wish to learn more about the handling and use of theater collections. It may be taken with or without academic credit in the library school.

### PLAY-WRITING CONTEST - \$500 AWARD

THE Topeka Civic Theater of Topeka, Kansas, is holding another play-writing contest. An award of \$500 is offered for the best original, full-length play, and the contest is open to everybody except members of the Topeka Civic Theater. In a similar contest conducted in 1947 the winner was William Gibson, whose play, *Two for the Seesaw*, is a current Broadway success.

Entries must be typewritten, on only one side of the paper, and the name of the author must not appear on the manuscript. A separate sheet should be enclosed, listing the name and address of the author and the title of the play. Entries must be postmarked no later than May 31, 1959. Address manuscripts to Contest Editor, Topeka Civic Theater, Box 893, Topeka, Kansas, and enclose stamped, addressed envelope for return.

The Topeka Civic Theater reserves the right to present the premier production of the winning play during the season of 1959-1960. The final judge will be a well-known figure in the theater. Preliminary judging will be by a committee of readers from the organization and by a member of the drama department of three Kansas colleges.

### SHOPPING AROUND

A NEW stagelighting handbook for architects, engineers, and drama directors has been published by the Ariel Davis Manufacturing Company, 3687 S. State Sta., Salt Lake City 5, Utah. The 28-page manual, a guide to planning and designing modern stagelighting installations for theater, hotel, school, and church, was prepared under the direction of Ariel R. Davis, stagelighting authority and president of the Salt Lake manufacturing firm.

The handbook is divided into two sections and features many specially prepared illustrations. Although the handbook sells for 50c, a free copy will be sent to those requesting it as a result of this announcement.

Mutual Hardware Corp., 141 West 53rd Street, New York 19, N. Y., has prepared a new printing of its complete catalog on theatrical hardware. These hardware supplies are used by theaters, T.V. studios, scenery builders, auditoriums, etc.

This catalog describes and illustrates the most complete selection of theatrical hardware known—including materials for set construction, set decoration, stage protection—and a wide variety of accessories and power tools. Many new, improved items described are available only from Mutual Hardware. The catalog itself is so complete that it is often used for educational purposes on set construction and decoration.

Any theater organization, studio or educational group that does not yet have a catalog can obtain one by writing to Mutual Hardware.

The Dramatic Publishing Company, 179 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago 1, Illinois: A new sound effects record of all necessary sounds required for most plays. This record is well-marked and is unbreakable. Sells for around \$6.

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A free descriptive play catalogue will be sent on request.

Play Department

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# International Theater Celebration 1959

by ALICE GRIFFIN

A MEXICAN comedy on a high school stage in California . . . Shakespeare in the spotlight in Nebraska . . . a Thespian troupe in Pennsylvania performing a Russian drama — productions like these at schools throughout the country have been staged each year for a movement called International Theater Celebration.

The motto of ITC is "the theater promotes international understanding," and those who participate stage a play which bears out this theme. ITC's sponsor is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which each year sends out a call to high school theaters asking them to participate in the celebration. Co-sponsors are the American Educational Theater Association and the National Theater Arts Council.

Of the hundreds of schools which have answered this call, the productions mentioned above are a sample of the variety of plays which have been offered as part of this ten-year-old nation-wide movement in behalf of international understanding. Josephine Niggli's Mexican comedy, *Tooth or Shave*, was an ITC contribution by El Cerrito High School in California; *Macbeth* was presented by the Wayne City High School in Nebraska; and Andreyev's *He Who Gets Slapped* was an ITC offering at Ambridge High School in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, where it was presented by National Thespian Troupe 1032.

These plays, as well as many others, both foreign and American, as presented by high schools for ITC promoted international understanding by showing us the lives and thoughts of people from other lands, or by reminding us of truths which we appreciate and share with audiences of other countries, whether the play (like one by Shakespeare) be from another time and land or from America at the present time.

Some high schools have celebrated ITC by holding a festival of one-act plays, as did the Albuquerque, New Mexico, high schools last March. The plays were presented in cooperation with the University of New Mexico and were four in number: *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*, *The Wandering Scholar*, *Night of the Penitentes*, and *The Ugly Duckling*.

In Northfield, Massachusetts, the Northfield Schools dramatic groups, the Mount Herman School for Boys, and the



*He Who Gets Slapped*, Troupe 1032, Ambridge, Pa., High School, John C. Barner, Sponsor

Northfield School for Girls offered as their international contribution *A Murder Has Been Arranged*, *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, and *Sunday Costs Five Pesos*.

There are six steps for participating in an International Theater Celebration:

1. Schedule a play or program any time during 1959 which will contribute to international understanding — an American, foreign, modern or classic play, as mentioned.

2. Write to the Chairman of International Theater Celebration, Prof. Herschel Bricker, University of Maine, Orono, for materials to help you in your planning. These include a Publicity Packet with news stories on the background of ITC, program quotations, and

a special article by Helen Hayes; and request the new ITC poster.

3. Announce in your publicity and your theater program that the production is a contribution to ITC — a sample program note is given in the Publicity Packet.

4. Display the official ITC poster and distribute to your audience either in your program or on a table display materials about UNESCO. (You obtain the UNESCO materials in quantity by writing International Theater Celebration, U. S. National Commission for UNESCO, Department of State, Washington 25, D.C.)

5. Encourage community support of and participation in your ITC program.

(Continued on Page 31)



# Drama-Liaison between School and Community

by MAYBELLE CONGER

**N**OAH Webster, brother to the noted public speaker, Daniel, has this to say about the word liaison: "A connecting link, or bond... a coordination of activities." Then he gives the military definition, and perhaps because we are currently more military minded, I prefer this one: "Intercommunication between units acting as neighbors." That's what we drama people do in our communities, whether large or small. We are constantly intercommunicating between the units in our civic life and our school life, thus producing an active good neighbor policy instead of a theoretical one. To be specific, let me list the various clubs and organizations in my particular community that the drama department has had direct intercommunication with during my twenty-one years of teaching drama in a secondary school.

Oklahoma City is a community of approximately 295,000, and there are many and varied organizations that are constantly in need of entertainment and assistance from the drama department. We have supplied these needs for women's and men's clubs, both local and national in scope, given programs at the Salvation Army's Goodwill Center, assemblies to boost the Red Cross Drives, entertained veterans at the hospitals, promoted summer programs for teenagers at our public library, given miniature stages made in a play production class to the crippled children's hospitals, entertained for the local chapter of the



Maybelle Conger in *The Heiress* at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Miss Conger participated in the Wisconsin Players summer repertory.

Telephone Pioneers of America, P.T.A. groups, weekly programs for the local U.S.O. during World War II, skits for the local Masonic bodies, an Easter pageant for the local chapter of the McDowell Club of Allied Arts, stunts for the recreational department of the city park department, advertised over the school sound system for civic theater groups, supplied students for a pageant staged at our State Fair by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, programs for business college groups, programs for sales meetings at J. C. Penneys, exchanged assemblies with both local and neighboring schools, and produced a weekly dramatic show over our educational radio station.

Too many times the community is under the impression that teachers live in an ivory tower and never get down into the market place. They are inclined to agree with those who say, "Those that can, DO, and those that can't, TEACH." We can correct this false impression by showing them that we speak their

language — the language of cooperation. I am not going to stop with the school and its contribution to the community. I believe the individual teacher can do much to bridge the gap between school and community. Throughout the years I have helped with Boy Scout Circuses, Camp Fire Girls' radio programs, written and produced P.T.A. Founder's Day Pageants, directed an alumni group in a program honoring a retiring principal, given play reviews at the library during the summer, produced radio and TV programs during National Education Week, loaned make-up and costumes to civic groups, furnished a local scenic company with boys for summer jobs, advised a drama group about buying a stage curtain for their Sirosis club, taken part in civic theater plays, travelled to nearby towns to help direct class plays, and helped stage shows for various civic groups.

If I sound like twins or triplets, remember that drama teachers are supposed to be two or three places at once and that they are the Purple Heart People of any faculty. They go far beyond the call of duty.

Another nice gesture toward community cooperation is the awarding of honorary memberships in your national speech clubs to various civic leaders and professional people who have expressed an interest or a desire to help with your drama program. Our National Thespian Troupe has awarded honorary memberships to the founders of one of our civic theater groups, to a former student of mine who is now in Hollywood both as director and star in his own movie company, and to a newspaper reporter who has given us helpful publicity through the years... these and others received their honorary memberships at a formal initiation where patrons and school administrators were our invited guests. My troupe officers and I often go to local and neighboring schools and initiate troupes that are just becoming affiliated with the National Thespian

(Continued on Page 30)



*Ladies Alone*, Troupe 822, Central High School, Oklahoma City, Okla., Maybelle Conger, Sponsor



# A PLAY PUBLISHER SPEAKS

by SHERMAN L. SERGEL

PLAY publishing is small business — there is not a play publisher in this or any other country that could under current standards be called a "big" business. But it is also a delightful business, despite the headaches and heartaches. It contributes to the educational theater, but it also supplies plays for all manners of organizations as well — granges, lodges, service clubs, church groups, little and community theaters, and almost any group where a few are gathered together and somebody says, "Let's give a play."

In order to answer the question your editor asked us — What are the ingredients necessary for the publication of a play? — it may be wise to look first at some of the special limitations of play publishing and also take a brief look at play publishing in the past half-century.

First, play publishing has to differ from general trade publishing in many ways. Few people go into a bookstore and ask for a novel with seven characters in it, or seventeen, with more women than men, with the further requirement that all these characters have their conflicts and evolutions in just one place — preferably a living-room. Also the general publisher of fiction and non-fiction does not have the horrible necessity laid upon him of collecting performance royalties.

In addition to what may be called the arithmetic of plays, plays must have different themes as well as moods. A look back through the seventy-three years of our own publishing history shows that various thematic demands have been made. Years ago, temperance plays, such as *Ten Nights in a Barroom* and *The Drunkard*, were seriously presented all over the land to further the cause of temperance. A few decades later, such plays were burlesqued. (Maybe the first producers were right!) In the early part of the century comedy-dramas, such as *The Dust of the Earth*, were widely given along with farces of the general character of *Mrs. Temple's Telegram*.

But such plays, with a few exceptions, are unsalable now. The work of the educational theater — and of several play publishers — have changed that. That will be dealt with a bit later on. There have been brief vogues for college plays, for plays of the circus, and there have been many, many "family comedies." It is to be suspected that these family plays will continue to be presented as long as we have families, for it is in families that we live and fight and fail and succeed and have our being. Along with



Dino, Troupe 1543, Liberty High School, Bethlehem, Pa.,  
Elizabeth Shimer, Sponsor

this trend has gone the trend toward plays dealing with young people and high school students and teachers and their specific problems, such as *What a Life*, *Our Miss Brooks*, and *Time Out for Ginger*.

But changes are under way. The family play has taken on another and deeper note. What of the children of broken families, or of those with no family? When our company published *Dino*, a dramatic study of juvenile delinquency, we published it only because we thought it was a good play. There was no one on our editorial staff who believed it would become as much of a best seller as it became. The same can be said, in part, of Reginald Rose's other TV play, *The Remarkable Incident at Carson Corners*. There, in a play which centered on community responsibility for schools and students, we expected a moderate sale, but we had an excellent sale and still have it. Both plays are serious, searching, probing. (And more than one interior living room set is involved!) We have recently followed this with an adaptation for the stage of the

famous motion picture, *Rebel without a Cause*, with the same result.

It was excellence that counted, and excellence that reached into hundreds of communities. But we have published many excellent plays that we *thought* would succeed, which haven't. But now and then, often enough to keep a publisher hopeful, a play of excellence with apparently everything against it, surprises. Almost thirty years ago we published a Christmas play, *Come Let Us Adore Him*, by Victor Starbuck. It had several sets, required more men than women, and furthermore, it was poetry. No sale was possible — but! — the royalties still go to the third or fourth generation of heirs of the author.

Experiences like these are heartening, and they are, I believe, common to almost all play publishers, though since I do not have access to the sales records of other publishers, I have to write here primarily about our own plays. And as the educational theater becomes more adventurous, and it is doing that, play publishing gives promise of being even more exciting than it has been in the past.

What lines will it follow? How tell an author what to write about?

We wish we knew!

About all we can do is to probe and search and hope. We do this in the firm conviction that the theater is far broader than Broadway. Since the first shepherds in ancient Greece gathered to give their goat-songs (from which the word "tragedy" derives) and to enact their simple plots drawn from old legends, the same impulse toward drama has motivated millions of people and still does — whether in school or church or lodge or grange. Manifestly the educational theater is the heart of this, but the drive toward drama is part of us all, and it will always find expression, and nothing will kill it while man is man.

In looking for plays that will serve this drive wherever it appears, we shall be looking everywhere for themes and playwrights — to books, to the best of tele-

(Continued on Page 29)



Around the World in Eighty Days, Troupe  
1733, Americus, Ga., Sr. High School,  
Mrs. T. P. Fennessy, Sponsor



The elaborate Joseph Urban setting and the cast of Act II of the original production of *Show Boat* (1927), depicting an African Village on the Midway of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair

AMERICAN MUSICAL THEATER SINCE 1920

## THE MUSICAL PLAY: Part 1

By DELWIN B. DUSENBURY

THE "Twenties" and the "Thirties" had seen the gradual transition from the gay operettas, elaborate revues, and brassy "book" shows, in which the "book" was forgotten before the end of the first act, to musical productions which offered an integrated pattern of song, dance, music, and dialogue. The Gershwin satires, the sophisticated productions of Cole Porter, the rhythmical presentations of Rodgers and Hart and their contemporaries indicated that the musical theater was developing a significant form of its own. Still, George Jean Nathan, the eminent critic, writing in 1946, deplored the trend:

The best show of the kind, in brief, is that one in which the people, like Topsy, were not born but just grew, and whose growth, furthermore, is stunted by mindlessness, giddiness, and irresponsibility.

Still, that same year, he had to confess, after viewing a successful revival of *Show Boat*, the production credited as the first significant musical play in our theater history, that "one really believes in its love story." *Show Boat*, first presented in New York on December 27, 1927, after a quarter of a century remains rightfully as America's foremost popular musical drama.

Florenz Ziegfeld is credited with seeing the possibilities of a musical play in Edna Ferber's best-selling novel, which was considered by Rudyard Kipling as the best novel to come out of America since Mark Twain. Ziegfeld commissioned Jerome Kern to write the score. The veteran composer rose to the occasion and wrote the best score of his long career in the musical theater. Kern

selected as his librettist a young man with whom he had worked on *Sunny* in 1925. The young man was the grandson of Oscar Hammerstein, the famous opera impresario of the "nineties," the son of the fabulous Willie Hammerstein, a theater manager, and the nephew of one of Ziegfeld's major competitors, the great Arthur Hammerstein.\* The young lyric writer, Oscar Hammerstein II, welcomed the opportunity in the hope that Ziegfeld's acceptance of his work would offer sufficient proof that he was not riding through the musical theater on his dis-

\*Variety and Vaudeville," DRAMATICS, February, 1958.

### BROADWAY LINE-UP

ALVIN THEATER—*Bells Are Ringing*, Judy Holiday. Musical comedy.  
 ANTA—*J. B.* Drama.  
 BARRYMORE—*Look Homeward, Angel*, Miriam Hopkins. Drama.  
 BOOTH—*Two for the Seesaw*, Anne Bancroft, Dana Andrews. Comedy.  
 BROADWAY—*West Side Story*, Carol Lawrence, Larry Kert. Musical.  
 CORT—*Sunrise at Campobello*, Ralph Bellamy, Mary Fickett. Drama.  
 HAYES—*Touch of the Poet*, Helen Hayes, Eric Portman, Betty Field, Kim Stanley. Drama.  
 HELLINGER—*My Fair Lady*, Edward Mulhare, Sally Ann Howes. Musical comedy.  
 LONGACRE—*Pleasure of His Company*, Cyril Ritchard, Cornelia Otis Skinner, Charlie Ruggles, Walter Abel. Comedy.  
 MAJESTIC—*Music Man*, Robert Preston, Barbara Cook. Musical comedy.  
 NATIONAL—*Once More with Feeling*, Joseph Cotton, Arlene Francis. Comedy.  
 PLYMOUTH—*Marriage-Go-Round*, Charles Boyer, Claudette Colbert. Comedy.  
 ROYALE—*La Plume de Ma Tante*, Robert Doherty. Revue.  
 ST. JAMES—*Flower Drum Song*. Musical comedy.

tinguished ancestor's coat tails. As a result, Hammerstein created a book which, according to Richard Watts,

... captures and maintains, in addition to a great deal of the sweep, color and richness of its period and the racy Americana of its setting, a high romantic mood that frequently succeeds in being honestly touching.

The story is simple, the characters are human beings with understandable hopes, weaknesses and disappointments and the Mississippi River show boat provides a colorful backdrop for this living narrative of America in the "nineties."

The first act depicting the activities of life aboard a show boat introduced such unforgettable characters as Cap'n Andy Hawks of the "Cotton Blossom," his peppery wife, Parthy Ann, the unforgettable mulatto girl, Julie, and the Cap'n's lovely daughter, Magnolia, who is in love with the handsome gambler, Gaylord Ravenal. The romance between Magnolia and Ravenal leads to such lovely duets as "Only Make-Believe" and "Why Do I Love You." Julie's unfortunate life is expressed in the "torch songs": "He's Just My Bill" and "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man." All are situation or "plot" numbers. Even the most memorable song of the score, "Old Man River," sung by Joe, a Negro deck hand, has for its inspiration the struggles of his race as contrasted with the constancy of the majestic rolling river. The first act closes dramatically with discovery of the elopement of Magnolia with Ravenal. The second act is devoted to the search for Magnolia, which leads Cap'n Andy to the colorful 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, the finding of the deserted and unhappy Magnolia and her baby daughter Kim, who is brought back to the "Cotton Blossom" and grows into an exact lovely duplicate of her dead mother (the same actress plays both roles).



*Show Boat* has not only brought fame to many well-known figures in the musical theater, but also many established stars have enhanced its casts as the following comparison indicates:-

#### THE CASTS OF VARIOUS PRESENTATIONS OF *SHOW BOAT*

Character	Original 1927 Prod. (572 perf.)	1946 New York Revival (418 perf.)	1951 Motion Picture (MGM Picture)
CAP'N ANDY	Charles Winniger	Ralph Dumke	Joe E. Brown
MAGNOLIA	Norma Terris	Jan Clayton	Kathryn Grayson
RAVENAL	Howard Marsh	Charles Fredericks	Howard Keel
JOE	Jules Bledsoe	Paul Robeson	William Warfield
JULIE	Helen Morgan	Carol Bruce	Ava Gardner
PARTHY ANN	Edna May Oliver	Ethel Owen	Agnes Moorehead

As one critic noted:

A musical classic is never born overnight. It must be sung again and again. Lovers must dance to it and lonely people must hum it to themselves. Then, after many years, if it still sounds fresh and heart-warming, it is recognized as a classic. Such recognition was won by "Show Boat"...

Countless professional and non-professional productions of *Show Boat* indicate that it "keeps humming through the mind of the world, awakening dreams of love and beauty."

Four years later, Kern and Hammerstein collaborated on the successful *Music in the Air* (1932), but it was overshadowed by the sweeping popularity of Gershwin's *Of Thee I Sing*, which indicated that the American public preferred to have their musical entertainment seasoned with topical satire and social significance. As a result, the late "Thirties" saw the emergence of two composers whose expert musicianship was devoted to furthering the musical play: Marc Blitzstein and Kurt Weill.

Marc Blitzstein (1905- ), born in Philadelphia and a student of Nadia Boulanger and Arnold Schoenberg,

gained his first recognition with *The Cradle Will Rock* (1938), "a play with music." Written for the Federal Theater Project, America's short-lived but often exciting experiment with a government

subsidized theater, the first performance of the show was cancelled in Washington, D.C., possibly due to its controversial capitalism-vs-labor theme. Rescued by Orson Welles' Mercury Theater, *The Cradle Will Rock* was presented in New York without scenery, with some of its cast seated in the audience and with its composer at the piano. But as one member of the audience reported:

The players just sit on straight chairs set in rows, then get up and sing. Remarkable how they characterize with no make-up, no fancy clothes to help. It has to come from the inside. Remarkable how, in an entertainment world drugged with manufactured glamor, they conjure Steel Town out of thin air, set it raw and terrible before your eyes.

The dramatic portrayal of what happens in Steel Town when Mr. Mister, a capitalist, and his family attempt to control the destinies of the worker-citizens was accompanied by a complex mixture of vigorous rhythms, sharp cords, and sweet melodies. Concerned with social justice, Blitzstein wrote an unsuccessful sequel, *No for an Answer* (1941), but in 1949 he gained an artistic if not box-office success with his musical drama, *Regina*,

based on Lillian Hellman's drama, *The Little Foxes*. Some critics felt that the theme was too sombre, and others pointed out that a composer's translation of spoken drama into musical terms must add a new dimension to the original. By 1949 Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma*, *Carousel*, and *South Pacific*, all adaptations, offered excellent examples of the expression of a new vitality that was different from that of the original work. A 1958 revival of *Regina* by the New York City Opera Company received much better notices, and only time will indicate whether *Regina* will become a significant part of America's musical theater repertory.

That there were apologists for the musical play was demonstrated by a publicity leaflet for Paul Green's startling war fantasy, *Johnny Johnson* (1936), stating that "while this is a play with songs, it is not a musical show." Larry Hart, who was in the first-night audience, asked the composer, "What are you trying to do, put people like me out of business?" The composer, Kurt Weill, might well have replied in the affirmative since he was determined that American theater audiences could appreciate the integration of popular music forms with serious dramatic themes. Kurt Weill (1900-1950), born in Germany, started his musical training under the famed composer of *Hansel and Gretel*, Humperdinck, which led to his appointment as a conductor of a provincial opera company. He wrote several operas including *The Three Penny Opera* (1928) with a libretto by the German playwright, Berthold Brecht. In 1954 this same opera with a new book and lyrics by Blitzstein began a sensational off-Broadway run at the Theater de Lys.

In 1935 Weill came to America to write the music for Max Reinhardt's pre-

(Continued on Page 28)



The Councilmen of New Amsterdam watch their new governor, Peter Stuyvesant, while he examines their annual report in *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the delightful political lampoon, as produced at the University of Florida.



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Atkinson, in the N. Y. Times, wrote: "It is an absorbing drama, solid, vigorous, fresh. Mr. Anderson has a sense of humor as well as a sense of comedy."

"Me, Candido!" has brought numerous honors to its author. A plaque was presented to him by the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico which read:

To Walt Anderson for his outstanding contribution to human relations and understanding among different peoples, through his play "Me, Candido!"

The Acting Assistant Director of the Community Education Program of the City of New York, under whose auspices a production of the play was presented, wrote Mr. Anderson: "As far as our Brotherhood program was concerned, there was no need for speeches or sermons on brotherhood; the play spoke for itself."

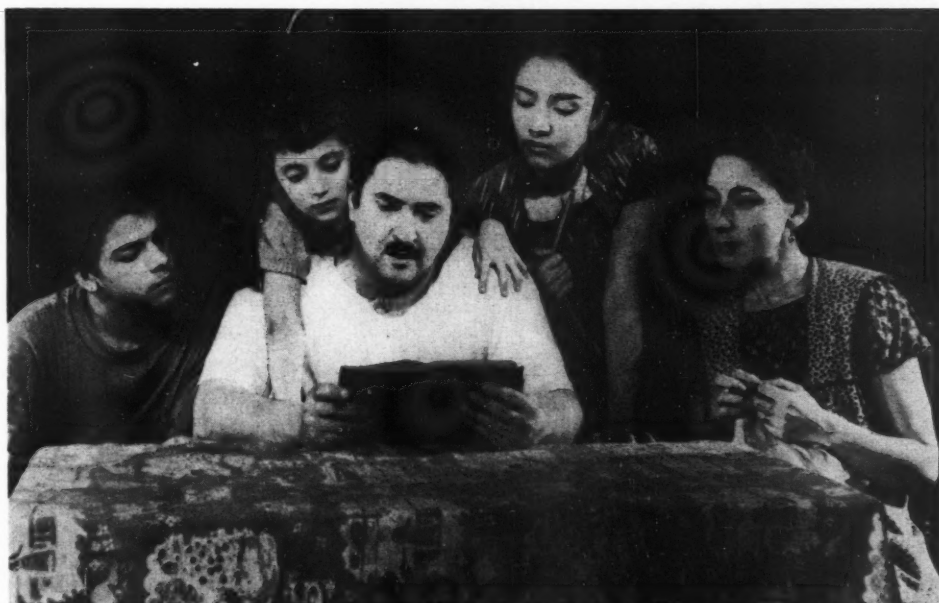


Photo by Avery Willard

8 men, 6 women; 1 boy, 2 girls. Unit set

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**The Story.** "ME CANDIDO!" is the defiant battle-cry of a homeless eleven-year-old shoeshine boy, who is unofficially adopted by Papa Gomez, a poor Puerto Rican with a large family recently arrived in New York; by truculent old Mr. Ramirez, proprietor of a restaurant locally known as "The Garbage Pail"; by Mike McGinty, an eloquent and thirsty ex-longshoreman, and by Yetta Rosenbloom, a lonely old woman whose family has drifted away from her. But the simple, kindly act of taking a boy in from the street comes up against the red-tape of officialdom. Candido can't work in "The Garbage Pail"; he must go to school; he can't go to school 'till he has been legally adopted. They need a lawyer — for free, money is for rice and beans. But Candido is a boy, not a case-history, and his fathers are determined to keep him out of an institution. The law does not concern itself with love. But the neighbors do, and the struggle spreads to the entire neighborhood. Candido becomes a cause celebre. Amid humorous entanglements, the situation is at last resolved in a poignant and moving scene in the courtroom.

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## IN ACTION



Thespian Troupe 821, Clover Park High School, Tacoma, Washington, Virginia G. Heidbreder, Sponsor

# Pageant Committees at Work

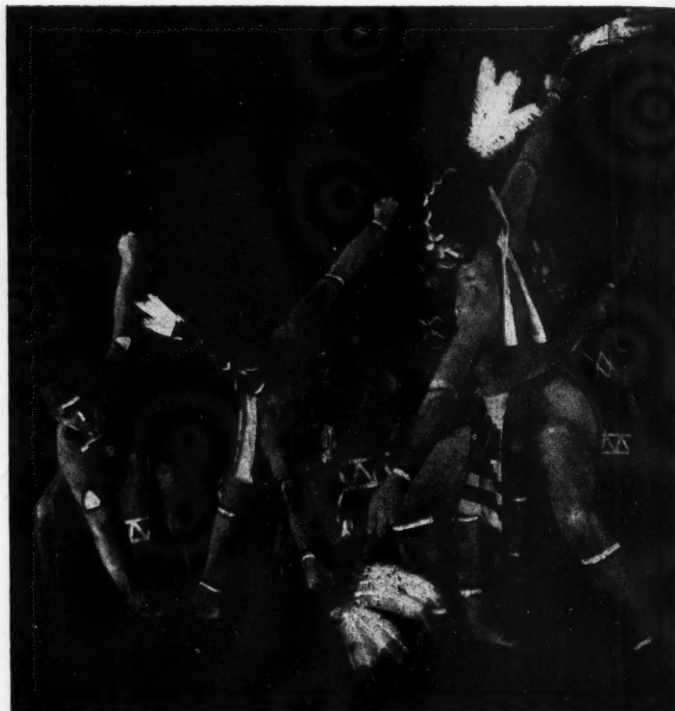
By CHARLES R. TRUMBO and POLLYANN

**C**OOPERATION is indispensable during the period that the "spade-work" is being done on a pageant production. All committee chairmen must work independently and collectively. Harmony must prevail. If and when jealousy and bickering shows its "Hydra" head, trouble is sure to follow. But working together as a team assures success.

One of the first duties for the Business Manager is to find the outdoor location for the presentation of the pageant or to arrange with the school administration for the use of the school or city auditorium.

"Pageantry is at its best out-of-doors." The most noteworthy pageants depicting local history have been produced in the open. This is particularly true of our symphonic dramas, *The Lost Colony* and *Unto These Hills*. There may, however, be some very definite reasons why your pageant is to be presented indoors—rainy seasons, periods of dust storms in certain localities, and other climatic conditions may be a deciding factor. Since we are presenting a pageant depicting the history and development of our local community, we are planning to give it out-of-doors.

The Business Manager should seek as near as possible an outdoor location that offers facilities that are in keeping with the episodes of the pageant and that will enrich the stage setting with its own natural beauty. An example is a pageant based upon the Legend of Hiawatha presented some years ago at a girls' camp at Franklin, North Carolina. The background of the pageant was a lake. The timing was so perfectly arranged that at sundown "Hiawatha" was able to climb into a canoe and sail into the setting sun across the lake as he retired to the Happy Hunting Ground. The audience was said to have been spell-bound as they looked out across a crimson lake into a natural sunset that suggested an Indian paradise. If the pageant is to be of an allegorical nature dealing with impersonal forces instead of local history, the front steps of your courthouse with its tall Grecian columns would be an ideal location. The building would act as a sounding board and offer excellent acoustics for speaking voices, as a band-shell does. At Ambridge, Pennsylvania, use of original background scenery in the Harmony buildings and the original costumes worn during Economy's "Golden Age" made the production more authentic. It was less expensive than other historical pageants that are presented in man-made amphitheatres away from the actual scene of history. Your pageant-drama, like the Cherokee's *Unto These Hills*, must be



Kermit Hunter's *Horn in the West*, presented at Boone, North Carolina

located in a suitable spot for the presentation of its local history. The original buildings of the Harmony Society of Old Economy may still be standing to give an authentic background for their pageant, but this is a rare instance. The original huts and the exact locations of most Indian dwellings have long since rotted away and been forgotten. The original buildings in your community have undergone many changes too; and like the Cherokee pageant that has to use painted stage sets in place of their original log cabins, you may have to improvise sets to represent your early community. So find a suitable spot—it may even wind up being the ballpark because of its seating arrangement.

The Scenic Manager now moves in to make use of the natural facilities that the Business Manager has selected. The amphitheater selected may be purely a natural one. At the first pageant we ever saw, the spectators sat on a sloping hill-

side with blankets or newspapers for seats and watched the performance in an open spot at the foot of the hill with a grove of trees for a background.

If the pageant is to be given at night, area staging like that used in our professional symphonic dramas can be used most effectively. In other words, the playing area of the pageant may be divided into at least three parts. While the action is taking place in one area, scenes for the succeeding episodes may be changed in darkness.

Episodes that are to have exterior scenes are generally played in the central area against the amphitheater's natural setting. Those with interior scenes are generally played in the areas on either the right or left staging area.

The Scenic Manager may find it necessary for his committee to build fragment or unit sets for the episodes using interior scenes. These unit sets, unlike the box sets for indoor theaters, are often no more than two wide scenery flats hinged together so that they can be closed as a book, with the painted sides to the inside. They are easily and quickly carried on at either left or right stage and opened out. Chairs and other "stage-props" are placed in front of them to form an interior scene. This enables the pageant to move at a rate of speed that is in keeping with the standards of performance set by radio and television. In times past audiences may have sat patiently while one episode after another walked slowly on and off, but our present-day audience is not quite so patient. However, if the pageant is presented in broad daylight out-of-doors, the audience will accept its limitations

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and enter into the spirit of the performance if it has been well organized.

If you must go indoors with your pageant, perhaps the most economical method of producing it is by the use of projected scenery. This is accomplished through the use of lantern-slide scenes to provide the entire stage picture, or used as an added lighting effect on simple stage properties. Projected scenery may supply the entire scenic effect, or it may be superimposed upon real stage scenery with splendid effects. This is recommended for its economy in materials, time, and work, and for the convenience in making quick scenic changes. In a moment one may have a scene to fill the entire proscenium. Change of scene may be made anywhere from four to forty minutes by a mere snapping-on of a slide. The problem of staging an entire pageant of California history, requiring over twenty exteriors, was met through the use of projected scenery. Examine your play catalogues for Louisa Santo's Projected Scenery for the School Stage. This will give you complete details. Although we have not personally witnessed the use of projected scenery in pageantry, we have seen it used indoors with professional Grand Opera Companies. We know that with proper equipment it is most effective.

If the method of projected scenery is too new for your pageant committee to accept, the next most economical method is the use of unit sets before a cyclorama in your school or city auditorium. Since your playing area is not apt to be large enough to divide into three sections, all your episodes must be played in the center of the stage. For this reason your unit sets should be constructed as an immense fireplace screen—three approximately eight-foot-high stage flats that are hinged together in the back so that two side flats fold together and meet in the center. These may also be fastened together with two-way hinges so that interior scenes may be painted on both sides.

With the theme of local history in mind, your costume committee has been busy seeking out the older residents in your community who have old clothing in their attic trunks that can be used for authentic costumes.

The costume committee may be unable to find enough old clothes to dress all the leading episode characters authentically. Thus the Costumer must resort to other measures. Certain costumes have been ordered from costume houses outside of your community, but you find it too expensive to rent costumes for more than the most important characters. The Costumer and her committee begins making costumes for the minor characters. Costumes for the groups that appear in the allegorical scenes and dance numbers sandwiched in between the strictly historical episodes must also be made. She first consults with the Technical Director to see what colors she should use. Together they will talk

over how the costumes will show up under the colored lights after they are dyed. The Costumer purchases, through the Business Manager, the most inexpensive material that she can find, which is generally unbleached muslin. The price changes with the general economy and will range from as low as twenty to thirty cents per yard. She will also purchase Putnam dyes or some other brand that has a chart of exact directions for obtaining any tone of color. Some of the most exacting preparatory work of the pageant is the dyeing of fabrics for costumes and backgrounds. The professional pageant master, John W. Harkerider, was so proficient in the art of "tying and dyeing" that he could twist and tie the fabric in such a manner, before dipping it into the dye vat, to achieve any desired effect.

The Scenic Manager has sent his committee searching for antique furniture that may be borrowed for those episodes that use interior scenes. He certainly doesn't want to build any more "prop" furniture than he has to at this time.

While all this is taking place, the Business Manager and his committee have divided the community into zones. Zoning prevents the ticket sellers from canvassing the same people twice, yet assures complete coverage of the community. In order to cut down expenses on printing, the Business Manager, after a consultation with the Advertising Manager, has been able to get the tickets printed at no cost to the Pageant Committee. This has been accomplished by having a local merchant place his advertisement on one side of the ticket while the other side identifies itself as a paid admission to the auditorium or amphitheater.

The Advertising Chairman and his committee have written publicity for the

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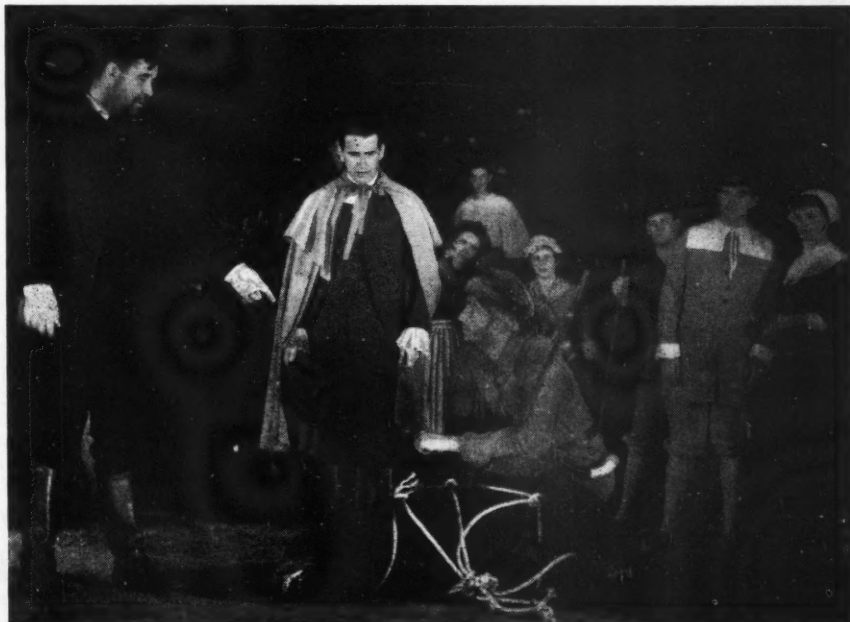
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local daily newspaper. He has furnished it with a different news story every day. Each day the story carries names of participants in certain episodes in the pageant. Merchants, especially those with store windows on the main street, have been contacted and have agreed to use the pageant theme to dress their store windows during the week of its performance. The committee has visited grocery stores and received permission to insert small handbills advertising the pageant into each bag of groceries that is carried out of the store.

During this time the Pageant Chairman is meeting with each committee chairman, sitting in on individual rehearsals, holding conferences and acting in an advisory capacity generally. He consults with the Business Chairman and coordinates the show as it develops and unfolds.

The preparation for your pageant is well under way, but don't "rest on your oars." There must be no anticlimax. Start soon enough, but keep up the suspense until opening night.



Kermit Hunter's *Horn in the West*, presented at Boone, North Carolina



## THEATER



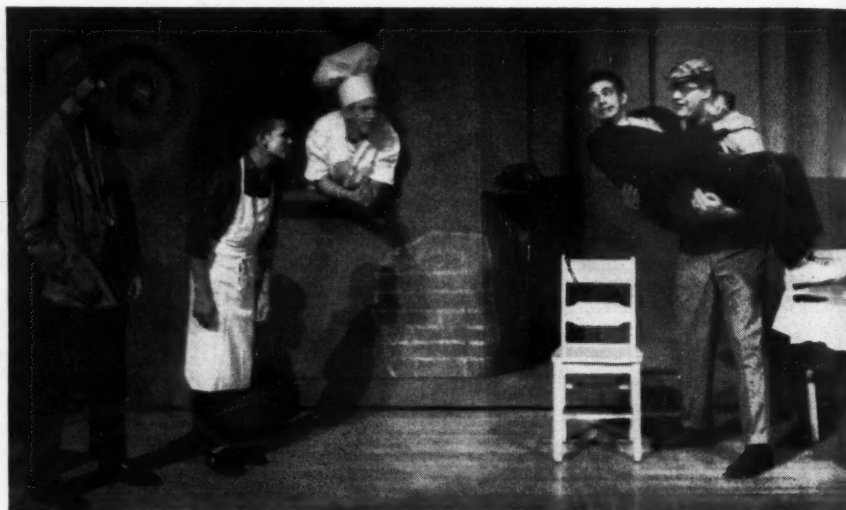
FOR  
CHILDREN

FRIEDA E. REED

### LET'S TAKE THE LONG VIEW

**M**UCH of our encouragement of Children's Theater has had to do with its immediate values, both to the child audience and to the high school producers. We have stressed the importance of providing good entertainment for the children of the community — entertainment in the best sense of that word, implying productions that do more than amuse, and those that enrich the child's experience. We have stressed the values of Children's Theater for the high school producers, citing the excellent training for actors and technicians in developing good productions and in the satisfactions to be received from the knowledge of making a vital contribution to the life of the community.

Important as these immediate values are, it is very possible that they are not so important as certain long range considerations in this matter of providing good theater for the very young. Let us look honestly at this situation in which all Thespians are vitally interested — theater in America. Yes, I said, let us look at it squarely in the face! Americans are not a theater conscious, theater loving people. It would probably be shocking to most of us to discover how many of the more than 150 million inhabitants of this country have never seen live theater and probably never will, shocking that is to those of us who love theater. Part of this lack of support and appreciation of one of the oldest arts is due to lack of opportunity. Theater in America is still a highly centralized art, obviously with Broadway the center. This in itself is a discouraging situation in a vast sprawling country such as ours. Certainly, there is theater available in a few large cities across the country, but with few exceptions the plays presented are ex-Broadway productions often toured by less than top flight companies. There are a few fine community theaters, and some excellent college and university theaters which are admirably serving their areas, but the unfortunate fact remains that the majority of Americans do not see good theater. Besides the lack of opportunity, there is the more serious matter of indifference. If we travel across this country and spend just a little time in looking at the magnificent and fantastically costly stadiums and gyms and then spend some time in looking for theaters, we soon see where Americans spend their money and time. We are a nation of game spectators and sports enthusiasts, and we are a nation



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blissfully ignorant and indifferent when it comes to the arts. This situation is blatantly evident in the public schools. In any budget for a building program, which receives the greater proportion? Gym or Theater? Ridiculous question! Who is to blame for this neglect of our cultural heritage? School officials? Boards of Education? *Not at all!* In the final analysis, these leaders of school affairs are subject to the wishes and tastes of that huge anonymous dictator — the People — the Taxpayer! We get exactly what we want!

What has all of this to do with Chil-

dren's Theater? It has a great deal to do with it — with the long view! According to Henry B. Williams, Director of the Experimental Theater at Dartmouth College, "The American theater is, of all our arts, the least permanent and most perishable."\* After some further comment and pertinent analysis of the problems of the American theater, Professor Williams continues, "In Europe the majority of city and state theaters foster their audiences in all sorts of ways. *They form the habit of theater-going early* by school matinees and also by the production of such a varied program

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Rip Van Winkle  
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*The plays listed above will be found fully described and illustrated in our catalogue*

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of plays that every taste is supplied with its favorite fare... At this point the reader might well ask: 'Is there *anything* good about our theater?' The answer is a resounding 'Yes!'... We have all the elements to make our theater the best, or as good as the best, in the world..."

"What is the answer? Any straight answer has a terrifying look and any real solution will be uphill, back-breaking work. We have all the elements needed to make our theater work, but we will have to restore habits of theater-going to a people who, through long neglect, have forgotten how."

This brings us to our challenge—to our long view in connection with Children's Theater. If we are going to "restore the habits of theater-going to a people, who, through long neglect have forgotten how," we cannot wait until those people are adults, or even until they are teen-agers. Habits are too thoroughly fixed and tastes too strongly developed by that time. The time to start to develop the habit of theater-going is with the very young, with the first-grader—yes, the kindergartner, and even the child of pre-school age. All that is necessary is to provide a vivid production of a good children's story, let the children and their parents know about it, and the houses will be packed.

Thespians have made great strides during the past thirty years in raising

the standards of high school theater, and it may be a temptation to say, "We have enough to do to provide theater fare for our own age group. Why should we take on the added responsibility of providing theater fare for the children of the community?" That is the short view—the near-sighted view. Already, in many areas the pressures are closing in. High school theater, along with all of the other so-called minor subjects and extra-curricular activities, is being subjected to examination and analysis. In one short year, in a topsy-turvy world, there have been hundreds of thousands of words spoken and written about cut-

ting here and cutting there in order that more time can be spent on mathematics and science. To those who can see farther than the short view it is very evident that now is the time when believers in the arts will have to double and redouble their efforts to prove their value. The first challenge to our high school theater people is to be sure that their house is in order, that their efforts in the area of theater are sound, and that their productions can justify themselves as contributions to furthering the arts as far as the audience is concerned and as sound training as far as the producers are concerned. If high school theater is to survive and grow, it must stand the inexorable test of value, and one of the most vigorous ways in which it can prove its value is to serve the community through bringing to the very young a piece of their artistic heritage.

Again we stress that this is the long view: If Thespians in all the troupes across this country would for one year seriously live up to their pledge to raise the standards of high school theater, and then provide just one good play for the children of the community, and then make the process a continuing one, there would be no serious problem about restoring the habits of theater-going to our people. Let us take the long view, and go to work!

\* Quoted from FACULTY FORUM (a tri-monthly supplement to the Dartmouth Alumni Magazine, Number 1, November, 1958)

### COMING YOUR WAY

LAST TRAIN FROM GUN HILL, western, Kirk Douglas, Carolyn Jones. (PAR)

THUNDER IN THE SUN, outdoor drama, Susan Hayward, Jeff Chandler. (PAR)

THE REMARKABLE MR. PENNYPACKER, comedy, Clifton Webb, Dorothy McGuire. (20TH-FOX)

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, drama, Millie Perkins, Joseph Schildkraut. (20TH-FOX)

SHADOW OF A GUN MAN, western, Charles Bronson, John Carradine. (20TH-FOX)

THE BAT MASTERSON STORY, western, Joel McCrea, Nancy Gates. (UA)

WESTBOUND, outdoor drama, Randolph Scott, Virginia Mayo. (WAR)

THE LAST ANGRY MAN, drama, Paul Muni, David Wayne. (COL)

GREEN MANSIONS, drama, Audrey Hepburn, Anthony Perkins. (MGM)

THE FIVE PENNIES, drama, Danny Kaye, Louis Armstrong. (PAR)





**A Doll's House**, Troupe 322, Clayton, Mo., High School,  
Blandford Jennings, Sponsor

### **A DOLL'S HOUSE** Clayton, Mo., High School

**ALTHOUGH** the problem of whether a wife should be treated by her husband like an adult and an equal may be decidedly dated, a picture of a woman struggling to keep her self-respect and individuality will always be gripping, especially when written by a master dramatist. Now that the play has been a classic for nearly eighty years, to summarize the plot is hardly needful — every well-read adult knows how Nora's husband refuses to take her seriously, and thus cannot share the knowledge of the sacrifices she had made for him. To make these sacrifices she had naively committed a forgery for which she is now being blackmailed. When all this comes to light, her stunned husband at first denounces her and then relents, deciding to be noble and "forgive" her. But Nora, unmoved by either the denunciation or the forgiveness, has made up her mind that it is only by being on her own that she can ever become a real person. As a theater historian has said, "The slam of the door that ended the play reverberated all over Europe."

Since Ibsen studied his characters for months before touching pen to paper, he knew them completely when he wrote his play. The result is a depth of psychological truth that is sure to excite an intelligent cast — and Ibsen mustn't be attempted by any other kind.

We were by no means sure that our audience — about half of them teen-agers — would "take" so serious and psychological a play. We were happy to find that they loved it. The last thirty minutes consists of a very tense dialogue between Nora and her husband, abounding in long speeches and physically nearly static. Yet our audience sat absorbed — they didn't even cough!

The play is not demanding as to set or props. It calls for costumes of around 1880. Two young children are needed for brief appearances. The principals

are three men and two women, with minor roles for a maid and a nurse. Since the only translations we could find dated from the 19th century, a certain amount of adaptation was needed to avoid obsolete idioms that would either puzzle or amuse today's listeners. Being in the public domain, the play is royalty-free.

In our experience, it was stimulating to the cast and exciting to the audience. Among the seventy-odd plays that I've directed, I should place it among the half-dozen that were most worthwhile.

BLANDFORD JENNINGS  
Sponsor, Troupe 322

### **GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE** Owatonna, Minn., High School

**THIS** hilarious comedy with its excellent, witty dialogue is a superb choice for a senior class production. In selecting the play I realized the staging



problems at once, and set about planning early. The story requires an old, broken down interior at the play's opening; then the house is made livable and attractive. The final scene entails a complete destruction of the set to revert to the original scene. Of course the props and set had to be basically preserved in order to permit more than one performance. We used bent wires to simulate cobwebs on the walls, covered the fireplace and stairs with gunny sacking and old papers which could be removed later. An old hand plow found in a farmer's field added much to the comedy. The Thespians collected pails of old cans and orange peels which were dry and could be thrown for garbage as required. The stairs and door frames were pieced so that with a slight blow they would crumble. All was quite effective. I also edited the scenes a bit where necessary to make a more suitable high school production.

Our Mr. Kimber was a natural for that role which carries the main thread of comedy, an Uncle Stanley was very well cast. The ten-year-old nephew was portrayed by a senior boy who was very small in stature; however, some groups might prefer to use a younger student in the role.

I feel that the play requires some experienced actors, but any director who is seeking good, fast-moving comedy should not hesitate to present this play because the audiences loved it.

HELEN STEPPE  
Sponsor, Troupe 971



**George Washington Slept Here**, Troupe 971, Owatonna, Minn., High School,  
Helen Steppe, Sponsor



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A DOLL'S HOUSE  
THE AVENGING EYE  
GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE  
THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

## THE AVENGING EYE

Eveleth, Minn., High School

*The Avenging Eye* is a mystery which proved so successful in its initial performance that some visiting high school classes immediately chose it for their own years before.

Three years before the opening of the play, Ken Marwick, working to save his town from the flooding Peril River, slipped, fell into the torrent, and was drowned. A bracelet with a staring eye painted on it was found on Ken's body. As some one put it, "One could swear that eye is full of vengeance." However, it was known that Ken had picked the bracelet up from his car where someone had inadvertently left it.

Ken's death was declared accidental, and the verdict was accepted by everyone except Ken's elderly father, Silas Marwick. Silas' attempts to prove that Ken was murdered become both suspenseful and dangerous. Nor is Silas the only one who is in danger. The play sweeps through laughter and fright to an unsuspected denouement.

The setting, an unpretentious living room, is within the means of any school. The story takes place during a spring lightning and rain storm, which sends the treacherous Peril River on another rampage and duplicates the conditions under which Ken Marwick met his death three years before. The storm causes intermittent failure of the electric power and, the room is at times plunged into eerie darkness. In a school which has no dimming system, candles and flashlight lanterns with green or blue bulbs may be used very effectively. Thunder and the beating rain may be produced



*The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, Troupe 452, Clinton, Iowa, High School, Melvin A. Erickson, Sponsor

by records or with a little ingenuity by student created efforts.

There are seven boys and six girls in the cast. This grouping may be rearranged so that there are five boys and eight girls, ranging in age from fifteen to sixty-two. Extras may be used if desired.

Since there are no demands in scenery or costuming, the play has a low budget.

Troupe 359 found merit, profit, and fun in *The Avenging Eye*.

JOANNE OREHEK

Secretary, Troupe 359

## THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

Clinton, Iowa, High School

JUST as Molière wrote to please his audience, Clinton's young Thespians acted and assumed their parts in such a way that our audience was receptive and rejoiced right with the players, especially during the scenes in which Sganarelle, Martine, and Geronte talked directly to the audience.

Still vivid are the actions of Martine

and Sganarelle. Here is a play which must be presented fast and acted vigorously with the whole body. Molière himself wrote in one of his brief prefaces "... plays are written solely to be acted." The comic effect of the lines depends upon patterns of movement springing from character and situation.

Costumes were the topic of conversation for nearly everyone in our troupe. Under the supervision of our wardrobe seamstress, we were able to design and make all of the costumes, hats, and money bags. But we did not stop there; we even added slippers. For material we made use of percale, taffeta, and corduroy. The costumes certainly expressed the spirit of the play and suggested the attributes of the characters. These same costumes with a few changes can be useful for future plays.

Two jesters were used to change the scenery from Sganarelle's house to that of another part of the woods in Act I. Then after Act I our entire stage crew swung into action, set up a platform with benches, rearranged the side flats, and covered the front part of the platform with paper designed like rock. The entire effect added an aristocratic air to Geronte's courtyard.

In conclusion, if one judges by production alone, Shakespeare is twenty times more popular than Molière although the French author is no further removed from our time than is Shakespeare, but Shakespeare wrote in English, and so enjoys a strong tradition. But I would recommend *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* because Troupe 452 learned so much during the rehearsals and presentations of the play.

MELVIN A. ERICKSON  
Sponsor, Troupe 452



*The Avenging Eye*, Troupe 359, Eveleth, Minn., High School, Luella McMahon, Sponsor

## PUBLISHERS

George Washington Slept Here, Dramatists  
Play Service, Inc., New York City  
The Avenging Eye, Northwestern Press, Minneapolis, Minn.

# Thespian Chatter

## NORTHAMPTON, MASS.

### Troupe 411

Northampton's Troupe 411 had a very busy year, presenting a great variety of plays. The fall production, *Little Women*, appealed to outside audiences, while *Dino*, in the spring, was especially welcomed by the teenagers. Both plays dealt with the problems and triumphs of growing young people. The freshman class wrote their own children's play, *Make Believe*, which they took on tour to all the neighboring grade schools. This fantasy was so well received that a repeat performance was given for the school children at the high school. We took *So Long*, a one-act play by Leopold Atlas, to the regional drama festival. This told of a young boy taking final leave of a playmate. The year closed with *Box and Cox*, John Morton's delightful tale of two proper Englishmen who meet in a room which each rented. Everyone agreed that the year had been most attractive and exciting for both actors and spectators. — *Beverly Driver, President*

## GARY, INDIANA

### Troupe 926

This was a memorable year for the Edison High School Thespian Troupe 926. Starting with our successful participation in the Indiana State Thespian Convention, at Kendallville, Indiana, we won a certificate of excellence for the one-act play, *Sky Fodder*.

As the school year began, our troupe sponsor, Mrs. Larrabee, assigned a radio play, *The People vs. Joe Miller*. The time had now come for our annual fall production of three one-act plays. They were *Happy Landing*, *Two Slaterns and a King*, and *The Farmer's Daughter*. We attended the Purdue Legislative Assembly at Lafayette, Indiana, as our fall trip. The Christmas pageant was *The Road to Bethlehem*. Our field trip for the year was to Chicago to see *The Happiest Millionaire*. Our biggest attraction for the year was a major production of *Beauty and the Beast*.

This year was a tremendous success and a year to be well remembered. — *Ethel Harris, Secretary*

## BAY CITY, MICHIGAN

### Troupe 143

The 1957-58 school year was one of great activity for the dramatics department of T. L. Handy High School. For the first of our usual three all-school plays we did *High Tor*. Immediately following this the Thespian Troupe chose *Much Ado about Nothing* for its annual Shakespearean play, lavishing it with elaborate costumes of the Elizabethan period. More costumes, these of the Nineteenth Century, followed in our spring play, *Charlie's Aunt*. On May 9th several of our students modeled many of these and other costumes at a meeting of the Michigan Speech Association at Ann Arbor.

In the meantime, the dramatics classes did their own children's plays, *Magic in the Cottage* and *Land of the Dragon*. Our radio-TV class presented half hour radio shows weekly over local station WBCM and live television shows every two weeks over another local station, WNEM-TV. We took several theater parties to Detroit to see professional productions. We also wrote skits for our annual musical variety show. — *Janet Dixon, Secretary*

## MARION, KANSAS

### Troupe 610

Ten boys from Troupe 610 were awarded a No. 1 rating at the State Speech Festival in Lawrence, Kansas. The boys were cast in a flash-back scene from the drama, *Time Limit!* Only one other school received the top rating in the One-Act Play division. Other dramatic feats accomplished by the entire Thespian

Troupe have been the following productions: *Paint the Town Pink*, *Why I Am a Bachelor*, and *Ladies of the Mop*. The Music and Drama Departments combined talents and produced what is to become an annual Music and Drama Spectacular. Thespians of Marion High School put our school on the map, and each Thespian was individually awarded by experiences never-to-be forgotten. — *Scribe*

## ENID, OKLAHOMA

### Troupe 1263

"I've never seen such a heart warming play. It certainly hits home." Comments such as these came in droves after our senior class play, *The Family Nobody Wanted*. Students in the play were made up to represent nine different nationalities. Yet, the spirit of the play led the audience to believe that, in spite of all the different races, people are more alike than they are different. As a pre-Christmas play it is perfect.

The junior class produced *The Birds and the Boys*, the story of a scatterbrained young bride who helped rehabilitate the inmates of a boys' school. This was a light-hearted, comical play, but it had its tender moments, too.

As the last play of the season, Thespian Troupe 1263 revived an old favorite, *Daddy Long Legs*. Best actor went to David Hamilton, a senior who appeared as "Daddy" in his first lead. The big surprise came when Margaret Hart was named best actress for her portrayal of old Tizzie Semple, seventy year old nurse of *Daddy Long Legs*.

We attended three play contests in addition to the state contest. Carol Baker was awarded the best actress award at the Northwestern Teachers' College tournament.

Highlighting the year was the annual banquet where president Steve Cool was named best Thespian boy and Kay Creed best Thespian girl. Honor Thespian awards were presented to ten outstanding seniors. — *Kay Creed, Secretary*

## BRADLEY, ILLINOIS

### Troupe 223

Thespian Troupe 223 had an active year culminating in the initiation of 20 new understudies in May.

Several juniors, who are Thespians, participated in the junior class play in October, *Diet of Dates*. The senior play, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, included in its cast ten Thespians.

In addition to these productions, a musical folk play, *Up on Old Smoky*, was presented by the Thespian Troupe and Dramatic Club in February.

Several Thespians participated in the Illinois State High School Speech Contest events, and the one-act play, *The Stolen Prince*, advanced to the Sectional Contest as well as four Thespians who participated in individual events. One Thespian, J. B. Pence, advanced to the State Finals in Verse Reading at the University of Illinois in April for the second consecutive year.

Our troupe sponsor, Agnes Stelter, directed a community theater play for the Kankakee Key-City Players, *Night Must Fall*, and two of our Alumni Thespians were included in the cast. — *Carol Davidson, Secretary*

## CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND

### Troupe 13

Our year began with preparations for Spotlight on Drama, a program of four one-act plays, which was presented in December. The plays chosen were *Too Much Mistletoe*, *Once in a Blue Moon*, *Tell Dorie Not to Cry*, and *The Boor*.

After Christmas plans were begun for the initiation of new Thespians. The ceremony was preceded by a comedy pantomime, *Wild Nell the Pet of the Plains*. This was presented by the initiates as the comedy part of their induction. The formal ceremony was conducted by the officers and other Thespians, at which time eighteen students became Thespians.

The climax of the year was the receiving of awards. A Best Thespian award was presented, and two students received their fourth star and became the first Thespians in our troupe to become Four-Star Thespians. Nine other Thespians received stars. — *Emma Stallings, Secretary*

## HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

### Troupe 300

Many people lately have expressed the opinion that the traditional senior class play should be discontinued because of the increasing sizes of classes. This would be a disappointment to many students who have been looking forward to helping with their class play since their sophomore year.

Our senior class has an enrollment of almost 500. Having a cast of fourteen and crews with about fifty people, our play, *Jenny Kissed Me*, by Jean Kerr, was a tremendous success. The whole class took great pride in this production.

During the year our senior class play was not the only hit. We presented several other plays one of which was entered into scholastic competition winning top awards in the District and State contests.

The senior class this year did indeed a great job in presenting the class play and in proving that even in a large high school senior class plays can and should be continued. — *Jane Thompson, Secretary*



Minor Miracle, Troupe 751, Mt. Pleasant, Mich., Sr. High School, Gene Duckworth, Sponsor



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**WESTON, W. VA.****Troupe 99**

Thespians Troupe 99 sponsored the annual One-Act Tournament Plays in January. The plays, which were directed by Thespians, were very successful. The senior play, *The Opening of a Door*, won the tournament.

In February Troupe 99 presented *Dino* for an appreciative audience. All the Thespians worked hard to make the play a success and had a lot of fun. In March the formal initiation was held in assembly. Thus the entire school was able to observe the ceremony. Seventeen members were added to the troupe.

To complete the year a banquet was held in May. At the banquet award pins were presented to the senior Thespians who had earned sufficient points, and the Best Thespian boy and girl were given keys. — Susan Stalnaker, Secretary

**MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE****Troupe 186**

There was a lot of interest in Thespian Troupe 186 last year because there were so many opportunities for participation in the drama field. We produced two three-act plays, *Stage Door* and *Mrs. McThing*, besides numerous one-acts and skits. We had more road shows than usual, and Thespians were invited to usher each time. The Memphis Little Theater produced outstanding successes and Memphis State University presented a good season climaxed with *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Our troupe meetings were interesting because we had outstanding guest speakers or performers at each meeting. The attendance was good, and our formal initiation with 50 candidates was a huge success. It was a good year and we plan a celebration with the other troupes of our area this year. — Robert Brown, President

**CLOQUET, MINNESOTA****Troupe 303**

*Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte's mysterious and romantic novel about a virtuous governess and her love for her master, was enacted in a moving performance by the Cloquet High School Dramatics Club on May 8 and 9. Through the superb and convincing performance of a cast that lived their parts, the play became a realistic and inspiring experience for all who had contact with it.

The reason behind the tremendous reception given this play came partially from the British Isles and an Irish lass, Betty Mayne. Betty, Cloquet's foreign exchange student, has studied dramatics since the age of 11 and will continue her studies at the Central School of Dramatic Art in London when she returns home. As a shy, but unbendable, governess, Betty and her leading man, Herb Bellingham, who portrays a stern, hard, and bitter master, backed by a versatile cast, created a live novel with skill admirable in any high school. — Ramona Pigman, Editor

**PORTLAND, OREGON****Troupe 536**

In May our Advanced Drama class produced a short play, *Snow*, which I had entered in the Scholastic Magazines playwrighting competition. My remembrance of this moment tells me that within one's mind there dwell unknown characters with neither name nor face. As time goes by you grow to love these visions and they to love you. Soon you begin to confide in one another and suddenly a secret ambition becomes so great that the world must know.

The problems and situations of the characters begin to mingle with your conscious thoughts. A compulsion to release these things to an interested world causes you to sit down and write.

Hours, days, weeks pass until at last a drama is written; each of the characters has a name and a life to lead. Each character is of your mind.

Now you must wait, wait until the curtain is going up. Fear and joy flash through your body leaving you exhausted and giddy. You have seen your play come to life. — Duane Shaver, Author



**Death Takes a Holiday**, Troupe 808, Paducah Tilghman High School, Paducah, Ky., Mrs. H. Richeson, Director

**BATTLE CREEK, MICH.****Troupe 1638**

Until three years ago there was no such thing as Troupe 1638 of the National Thespian Society. Since that time, the troupe has grown both in membership and activities. From its first year, in which it presented two plays which ran one night each, the troupe has jumped to one two-night play and one three-night musical.

Last year in November we presented the comedy *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*. It was well-received and played to unusually large audiences. Don Glancy, troupe sponsor and Drama Coach at Battle Creek High School, directed the show. He was very happy with the fact that the show was the first high school play to be reviewed by Battle Creek's drama critic, and also got a very favorable review.

In early May Mr. Glancy directed our second musical, *Oklahoma!* It turned out to be a vast undertaking, but was very profitable. The opening night audience alone numbered around 1300 people. In the remaining nights, the total number grew to over 3400 people, the largest audience ever to witness any dramatic production in the Battle Creek area.

Aside from the plays, the dramatics department also sold programs at the home football and basketball games. At our Homecoming festivities, the dramatics float won first prize in the float contest. All-in-all, this year was an especially active year for Troupe 1638. We initiated 23 members to bring the three-year chapter roll to 71. The Dramatics Club, from whose ranks come the Thespians, numbered 183 this year. — Scribe

**PORTSMOUTH, VIRGINIA****Troupe 1491**

A pair of shoes has found a special niche in the heart of each member of Thespian Troupe 1491, Cradock High School. Their presence has inspired us to continued success at the annual one-act play festivals in Virginia. A pair of shoes, belonging to our director, is our good luck charm.

On three occasions an actress has accidentally left her shoes behind. Always our director has willingly offered hers as she sat, shoeless, tensely watching the contest play. Her shoes became our good luck charm and added a special touch to the performance. Students leave always, and sometimes proficient directors relinquish their positions. Our director's shoes will be hard to fill. — Nancy Pritchard, President

**CHISHOLM, MINNESOTA****Troupe 1114**

On Tuesday, November 18, 1958, Thespian Troupe 1114 held its first formal initiation and

started things off with a bang. First on the agenda was to present the three-act play, *The Curious Savage*, which proved to be a smashing success.

To raise money for trips and conferences the group has held monthly bake sales. The result of our hard work and efficient salesmanship can be shown in our recent trip to Duluth, Minnesota, to attend the North Central Theater Association Conference. The highlight of the day was the evening performance of *Medea* presented by the U.M.D. players and directed by Harold Hayes. This intriguing tragedy was enjoyed immensely by all who attended. More proof of our ability to raise finances can be illustrated by our "fun project." During Christmas vacation our troupe went on a sleigh-ride. The spirit and companionship of the members was revealed in this delightful outing.

Projects ahead in '59 include constructing scenery, sponsoring a cutting from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for the annual variety show, and student directing three one-act plays for a night of drama. A week-end our whole troupe is looking forward to is May 8 and 9, when we will take part in the state conference at Ely, Minnesota.

Currently, interest in dramatics at Chisholm has reached a new high, and with the addition of 13 understudies to Troupe 1114, we hope that this attention can be renewed throughout the coming year. — Dianelle Domenichetti, Historian

**OMAHA, NEBRASKA****Troupe 950**

During our second quarter this year we Thespians have really kept busy! In co-operation with the music department, we produced our first Thanksgiving program. It consisted of a speech choir telling the true meaning of Thanksgiving while a series of tableaux illustrated that meaning. It was very effective.

We are now making preparations for our Thespian initiation which is to be close to Christmas. A meaningful one-act Christmas play is part of the program planned for the new Thespians and their parents.

The next event on our Thespian calendar is our annual Christmas program. With tableaux and Christmas music, we hope to bring the holiday spirit to our school.

Right after Christmas we will be busy preparing for our Children's Theater play, *Simple Simon*, which four of our members saw so beautifully presented at the National Conference. Thus a busy Thespian quarter will come to a close. — Nancy Mleynek, Secretary

## MUSICAL PLAY

(Continued from Page 15)

sensation of the Biblical pageant-drama, *The Eternal Road*. The following year marked his collaboration with Paul Green on *Johnny Johnson*, which met with critical acclaim. Weill was successful in his determination to interest the leading dramatists of the day in his concept of the musical play as noted by his work with Maxwell Anderson in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938) and *Lost in the Stars* (1949); with Moss Hart in *Lady in the Dark* (1941); and his adaptation of Elmer Rice's *Street Scene* into a musical play.

*Knickerbocker Holiday*, a delightful satire on life in New Amsterdam during the days of Peter Stuyvesant, had many contemporary political allusions in such lines as, "My name's Roosevelt and ven I get an idea, it sticks," and "An American is a fellow who resents being ordered around." The score offered a variety of moods: the romantic ballad, "It Never Was You," the rousing cantata, "All Hail the Political Honeymoon," and the patriotic "How Can You Tell an American." When Weill learned that Walter Huston was to play Stuyvesant, he listened to Huston's husky voice on the phone and then wrote a song tailored to Huston's limited range; the result, the simple but poignant "September Song."

Weill's next score was a complete change of pace, and *Lady in the Dark*, starring the scintillating Gertrude Lawrence, proved to be his most successful presentation. In 1947 with *Street Scene* Weill realized what he described as "two dreams": 1) "a real blending of drama and music, in which the singing continues naturally where the speaking stops and the spoken word as well as the dramatic action are embedded in the overall music structure"; and 2) "a musical theater which could eventually grow into something like an American opera . . . on Broadway." Other Weill scores include *One Touch of Venus* (1943) with lyrics by Ogden Nash; *Down in the Valley* (1948), a one act folk opera with a libretto by Arnold Sundgaard, first produced at the University of Indiana; *Love Life* (1948) in collaboration with a comparatively unknown writer named Alan Jay Lerner; and *Lost in the Stars* (1949), adapted from Alan Paton's tragic novel of South Africa, *Cry, the Beloved Country*. Weill's untimely death deprived the musical theater of one of its finest craftsmen who have expert senses of dramatic structure.

The new musical play form was given added impetus by the success of Vernon Duke's *Cabin in the Sky* (1940), which mixed musical comedy with fantasy, drama, ballet, farce and what have you. Vernon Duke (born Vladimir Dukelsky in Russia) was equally successful in the field of concert music as well as popular having written "April in Paris." Having received the completed libretto from

Lynn Root, Duke obtained the services of John Latouche (1914-1956), whose "Ballad For Americans" was already well-known. With Duke's music and LaTouche's lyrics, *Cabin in the Sky* utilized the talent of a superb all-negro cast including Ethel Waters, Todd Duncan, Rex Ingram, Dooley Wilson, and Katherine Dunham. The all-negro musical had been a part of our theater since the first of a series of revues titled *Shuffle Along* (1921), written by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake. Significantly, George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1935) ranks with *Show Boat* and *Oklahoma* as one of the three major works in the permanent repertoire of America's popular musical plays.

By 1943 the musical play was well on its way to an established place in the musical theater when Richard Rodgers was asked by Theresa Helburn and the Theater Guild management to prepare a musical score for Lynn Riggs' *Green Grow the Lilacs*. Larry Hart, his collaborator, because of ill-health, firmly refused to assist him so Rodgers turned to Oscar Hammerstein II whose book and lyrics for *Show Boat* indicated his mature concept of the musical play. The result of this collaboration received its New York premiere on the night of March 31, 1943, when *Oklahoma* was cheered by "first nighters" and a brilliant new chapter was begun in the development of the musical play.

## 1959 — REGIONAL CONFERENCES — 1959

FLORIDA (Central)	Boone Sr. H. S., Orlando, Paul M. Fague, Sponsor, Troupe 177, Program Chairman; Charles Trumbo, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 728, Bartow, Fla., H. S., March 7.
FLORIDA (North)	Roosevelt Hotel, Jacksonville, Ardath E. Pierce, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 942, Fletcher High School, Jacksonville Beach, March 6, 7.
FLORIDA (South)	Southwest Miami High School, Miami, Mrs. Lou D. McLean, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 336, March 13, 14.
INDIANA (Northern)	Elkhart, Ind., High School, D. J. Bussard, Sponsor, Troupe 653, Program Chairman; Juanita Shearer, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 872, Senior High School, Brazil, Ind., April 18.
MICHIGAN	Western Michigan College, Kalamazoo, Margaret Meyn, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 455, Benton Harbor High School, March 21.
NEW ENGLAND (Province)	Emerson College, Boston, Massachusetts, Barbara Wellington, Province Director and Sponsor, Troupe 254, B. M. C. Durfee High School, Fall River, Massachusetts, March 21.
NEW YORK	Drama Festival, State University of N.Y. Agricultural and Tech. Institute, Alfred, New York, Mort Clark, Program Chairman; Robert Timerson, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 1286, Trumansburg High School, April 29-May 3.
OHIO (Northwest)	Bryan High School, Mabel Robrock, Sponsor, Troupe 227, Program Chairman; Florence E. Hill, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, October 17.
OKLAHOMA	Central High School, Oklahoma City, Maybelle Cenger, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 822, March 21.
OREGON	Oregon State College, Corvallis, Melba Day Sparks, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 124, Jefferson High School, Portland, March 6, 7.
PENNSYLVANIA (All-State)	The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania, Dr. W. H. Walters, Head Department of Drama, Host; Margaretta Hallock, Sponsor, Troupe 520, William Penn Sr. High School, York, and Regional Director for Eastern Pennsylvania, and Jean Donahay, Sponsor, Troupe 187, J. A. Brashear High School, Brownsville, and Regional Director for Western Pennsylvania, co-chairmen, April 4.
WASHINGTON	Wenatchee, Wash., High School, Lillian Grace Brown, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 469, April 18.
WEST VIRGINIA	State Drama Festival, University of West Virginia, Mr. Sam Boyd, Program Chairman; Harry Leaper, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 3, Fairmont High School, March 19, 20, 21.



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## PLAY PUBLISHER

(Continued from Page 13)

vision, to authors who hesitantly send us their first plays — or confidently their latest. On these scripts we spend not only hundreds of hours of reading per year, but also many hours of editorial conferences, letters, long distance calls, seeing plays in production, and talking directly with the author.

We shall always be looking for plays that make people laugh, but also for plays that make them think and that make them feel. Above, we mentioned juvenile delinquency as a theme. Tolerance is also a theme that meets wider and wider reception today, as in *The Family Nobody Wanted*, and in the recently published and already successful *Thunder on Sycamore Street*, which latter theme deals with who can peacefully live where. (In this case, an ex-convict moves into a neighborhood that does not want his likes.) In the past, we brought out the Kerrs' dramatization of Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette*, which later went to Broadway. *The Robe* and *A Man Called Peter* have been welcomed throughout the country through the latter two never saw the Broadway stage. The plays just mentioned are all dramatizations of books or adaptations of TV plays. We are glad to have both. In ancient Greece, in Elizabethan England, on the professional stage today and especially in the field of motion pictures, dramatizations have formed a glowing and important part of drama. They always will. But we are always on the lookout for original plays. For instance, this year we have been happy about *The Unguided Miss*, a play dealing with foreign exchange students in the U.S.A., a play approved by the American Field Service, which directs foreign students' exchange, and written out of Mr. and Mrs. Davidson's experience of foreign exchange students in their own home through several recent years.

But we are only publishers, and it is finally the playwright who senses trends sooner than we do; once in a while we sense first and suggest a theme to an author. And sometimes we are wrong. We have learned not to rule out a play because of its theme. There was long a cliché legend on Broadway that no play about baseball would succeed. But just look at those *Damn Yankees!* An so, whatever so-called "trade secrets" we may cherish, we never cherish the thought, "A play about \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank) cannot succeed."

We do of course have to concern ourselves with some of the arithmetic of plays mentioned above. But more and more groups are willing to undertake plays that have more than one set — for which heaven and their courage be thanked! (The educational theater, with its frequent use of drapes and sets merely suggested by a few props, is often closer to the dramatic essence than the commercial stage.)

It is the better part of wisdom to be adventurous, and we are happy, as publishers, that more and more dramatic groups and directors, and notably the Thespians, are more and more willing to take chances. True, the theater — educational or little or community, school or church — can produce only the plays that are offered; but in the long run play publishers *can publish and offer only the plays that are accepted and produced*. If the producing groups will put one foot forward, we can put our foot a bit beyond that, and so shortly we are walking, marching together. But it is the playwrights who give us all the energy, the drive, that keep us both upright and advancing, and that is why, when we start reading a script there is always the eternal hope that this one is it, and — of its kind — excellent.

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## DRAMA — LIAISON

(Continued from Page 12)

Society. I try to have these either in an assembly or at a formal initiation where the parents can be invited. You may be wondering what do I, or my department, get out of all this extra-curricular work . . . besides cooperation. Let's visit a few of the many benefits of this intercommunication between school and community via drama.

You, therefore your school or department, will receive excellent newspaper publicity. R. G. Miller of "The Smoking Room" in the Oklahoma City Times once wrote, "A downtown church with a banquet for 350 people already set needed a spot of snappy entertainment in a hurry; funny, melodramatic stuff was preferred. The head of the works called our sanctum. Could we provide something on short notice? The first person that came to mind was Maybelle Conger, who heads the speech and dramatics at Central High School. She was at home too when we called. Yes, she could and would deliver. And the skits she put on with her high school actors were the best done we've seen in a long time." You can't buy that kind of publicity for yourself or your school. The clubs that you provide entertainment for will be more cooperative when you need to call on them to judge a one-act play contest or help out with a Thespian conference. The library will call you about films they get in that they think you may be interested in, your local P.T.A. can be of assistance to you throughout the year, your local Chamber of Commerce is in a position to benefit you also, and if your students have assisted them, you will be the first one they will think about if some job comes along that would offer financial assistance for your students. This past November when the Chamber of Commerce needed boys to stuff the kits that the BIG ONE drive solicitors would use they called me and I supplied them with boys from my department who were badly in need of extra money. Another example of this intercommunication came when one of our civic theater groups did *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. They needed a negro girl for the slave Tituba, and since I teach in an integrated high school they called me. I had a talented young girl who did a splendid job in the play and brought excellent publicity to our high school through a feature article in the newspaper. Also she was a member of our Thespian troupe and had the distinct honor of being the first member of her race to appear in a civic theater performance in our city.

One commodity that can't be bought but that is in great demand is good will. We seemingly can't have peace on earth but we can have good will in our communities. This intercommunication is a two way stretch . . . and gives you a mighty comfortable feeling in this case, too!

Let me sound a note of warning at this point. If we stick only to the letter, we will be sadly disappointed in our dividends . . . financial and otherwise. We must remember that the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life. I am bored stiff with the routine teacher and her routine teaching — the one who is more interested in the technical difference between the Stanislavsky and Delsarté methods of acting than she is in getting out of her rut long enough to explore the possibilities of this intercommunication. I fully realize that there are communities that keep the teacher so hemmed in by routine duties and routine curriculum that she has little or no time for any coordination of activities. But I believe that type of community is the exception rather than the rule.

Let us all try to be imbued with the spirit so beautifully expressed by William Lyon Phelps in his book, *The Excitement*

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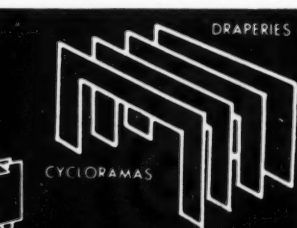
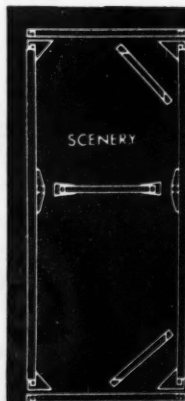
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of Teaching: "Maintain a daily interest in your work . . . have a chronic enthusiasm, regard each day as important . . . the excitement of teaching comes from the fact that one is teaching a subject one loves to individuals who are worth more than all the money in the world." If we drama teachers would use this as a guide in our own attitude we would find it reflected in our student's attitude and they in turn would pass this enthusiasm on to our community. It is gratifying to me to live in a community where I can bask in the reflected glory of students whose dramatics have been put to good use. For example, the program directors of both our TV stations were members of our dramatic club which affiliated with National Thespians in 1947. It is interesting to note how many drama students take part in their local theater groups after graduation. One Christmas card I received read in part "Was Aunt Mary Drexel in *Happiest Millionaire* and just finished *My Three Angels*. I was stage manager and did lighting in our Little Theater." This from a girl who played the lead in *Stage Door* in her senior play and was so nervous and frightened that she swore it was her first and last appearance! Now she finds time to manage a home, husband, three children and the stage!

If it is true that the only hope we have for immortality is to live in the hearts of others, I sincerely believe that if we as drama teachers, can accomplish some of the objectives set forth in this article we will live in the hearts of our students and communities long after the final curtain has been rung down on this mortal comedy of errors.

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### INTERNATIONAL THEATER

(Continued from Page 11)

Suggestions are contained in the Publicity Packet.

6. Report your ITC production or program for 1959 to the Chairman, whose address and name are given above.

Although you may present a play or program about any country, in 1959 we are stressing the Latin American countries. We are thus asking schools to consider these countries in making their play choices. Plays with a Mexican setting by Josephine Niggli have been favorites with high schools in the past, and you may like to consider one of these for ITC, 1959. The High School of Performing Arts presented very successfully a production of Miss Niggli's, *Sunday Costs Five Pesos*, as their contribution to international understanding.

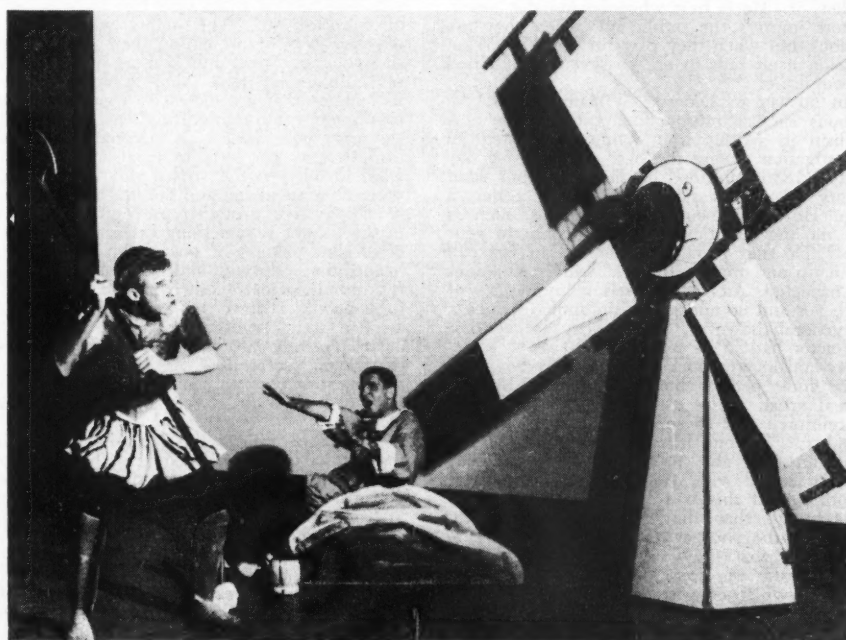
To accompany the ITC production, high schools have arranged library exhibits of books and posters on the country represented in the play; radio programs; and in one instance an exhibit of dolls dressed in foreign costumes.

Other high school actors have enjoyed putting on a children's play as a contribution to International Theater Celebration. Dramatizations of stories by Hans Christian Anderson have been popular, and so have stories from the Orient and from India. For a display to accompany a children's play, ask the U.S. National

Commission for UNESCO to send you posters and literature showing children from other lands (the address to write to is given above in step 4).

The high school actors in America have made an important contribution to International Theater Celebration dur-

ing its first ten years. All of us who have worked for the celebration are hoping that the high schools will be playing an even larger part in the years to come. Schools affiliated with the National Thespian Society can show the way for all high schools of our country.



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# BRIEF VIEWS

By WILLARD FRIEDERICH



**THE PARADOX OF ACTING** by Denis Diderot and **MASKS OR FACES?** by William Archer. 1957, Hill and Wang; 240 pp.

For a long time now the quarrel has continued as to whether acting is a matter of the head or the heart. This paper-cover reprint of two famous essays on the subject presents first the essay by the French critic Diderot, published in 1830 (46 years after his death), in which, as Harold Clurman points out in his introduction, he explains "what acting should be — not what it is." He mistrusted the current theory that acting was based on sudden flashes of inspiration and emotions, and insisted that, instead, "the man whom Nature stamps an actor does not reach his topmost height until he has had a long experience, until the fury of the passions is subdued, until the head is cool and the heart under control." Many have understood Diderot to mean that the great actor experiences no emotion in his plays and uses only his intellect in deciding what techniques to use in portraying his role; but, actually, discounting the exaggeration that the crusader always employs in order to make his point to a hostile audience, Diderot basically pleaded for a show of judgment and discipline that would help the actor to understand, select, and refine his reactions of thought and feeling about his character. This explains the further paradox that Stanislavsky himself considered Diderot's dialogue-essay one of the most important of the treatises every actor should know. Surely the master of inner motivation of a character would agree with Diderot when he said, "A sure way to act in a cramped, mean style, is to play one's own character. You are, let us say, a tartufe, a miser, a misanthrope; you may play your part well enough, but you will not come near what the poet has done. He has created the Tartufe, the Miser, the Misanthrope." And even those who insist that the actor must to one degree or another feel what he plays will really find much truth in the statement that "they say an actor is all the better for being excited, for being angry. I deny it. He is best when he imitates anger. Actors impress the public not when they are furious, but when they play fury well... What passion itself fails to do, passion well imitated accomplishes."

In answer to Diderot, William Archer, the famous English critic and apostle of the new realism in writing and acting, conducted an investigation among the best actors of his day and in 1888 published his findings about what actors themselves said they did in acting a role. He asked them many questions, such as "In moving situations, do tears come to your eyes? Do they come unbidden? Can you call them up and repress them at will?" As might be expected, Archer received many replies of both yes and no and some conditional maybe's. In general, however, the majority agreed that the actor had to be well supplied with "sensitivity and imagination," but that they both had to be under perfect control if he was to become a real artist. "The use of inward emotion is to reinforce, not to supplant, outward expression," for "no one has ever doubted that the actor must be able to express what he feels, or the feeling will avail him nothing." Most actors agreed this was true in either comedy or tragedy, that they were often inwardly moved to the point where their technique suffered, but that they also often had "two or more strata of consciousness, or lines of thought" which co-existed in their minds while doing a role. In conclusion Archer decided that the anti-emotionalists, or followers of Diderot, were afraid of excesses of emotion — that were indeed wrong but also easily avoided; but that no mechanical actor could ever rise to the

heights open to the actor "who combines artistically controlled sensibility with perfect physical means of expression." The gap between Diderot and Archer is therefore actually not too great; and certainly no serious modern actor should be without a knowledge of the work of either writer — a possibility now easily fulfilled with this reprint of both works that were unavailable for so long.

**METHOD — OR MADNESS?** by Robert Lewis. 1958; Samuel French; 168 pp.

Almost a century after Diderot and Archer, the controversy still rages though with different names and works in question. Ever since Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theater tried to analyze and record what he thought was the bases of the art of the best actors he knew, the theater world has argued about his demand for inner motivation of character and his suggested methods for attaining and expressing it. The so-called "Method School" of acting — of which the most famous at the moment is probably Actors Studio run by Lee Strasberg — is revered by some and scorned by others, with much justification on either side. Now Mr. Lewis, a successful director of the professional theater for a quarter of a century, publishes his eight lectures presented to interested theater folk in New York in 1957 and clears up many of the unfounded ideas and half-truths that surround the theory.

So rich are these lectures in ideas that it is impossible to even mention, much less discuss, them here; but some of the best must be recorded: "There is no guarantee that if you do everything right, according to any method, the result will be acceptable art. There are some untalented technical experts in acting, as well as some very talented actors who cannot execute the simplest technical problems... It is a mistake to wait to act until you feel. I think that truth need be untheatrical or that theatricality need be false. It is not advisable to use only outside means to create, because I do believe that stifles your true feeling instead of releasing it." The actors who reject an effective way of presenting their roles because they do not "feel right" about it are merely self-indulgent because "they gravitate naturally to feelings that are closest to them and therefore more comfortable for them. It is unlike the artist who studies his material and chooses his elements correctly to create with. And I want to tell you the artist's way of working is very often agonizing and not at all comfortable... There is a mistaken conception that style in the theater is something external only, a sort of elegant manner of posturing, plus speaking beautiful emptinesses, and that realism is deeply felt psychological truth with no attention to form at all. I think they are both wrong. All art has form. Realism must have its form too or it descends into the slice-of-life naturalism that is no art at all." Mr. Lewis also favors reading the play to his cast for the first rehearsal so that all get the same first impression of it.

Mr. Lewis rejects the often-held idea that the method is concerned only with inner motivations and that, if these are right and true and powerful, the actor will automatically be right in his outer expression of them; for technique of expression is a totally different problem. He uses Stanislavsky's writings as his evidence, pointing out that whereas the first book, *An Actor Prepares*, does concern itself only with inner motivations, the second one, *Building a Character*, is primarily about the outward technical expression of character. He feels that the modern lack of balance of the two aspects is because the first book was published in 1936,

thirteen years before the second, and consequently had years of study and emphasis before the second arrived. He also stresses that the method is merely one available technique for good acting, and that it refers to acting in any style of production, not merely serious or realistic plays. In fact much time is spent in showing how it can be used in Shakespeare or farce or stylized dramas as well as in Gorki. Best of all, he exposes the obvious fallacies of method actors, such as their frequent tendency to mumble lines because that's the way one would say them in a real-life situation. Here, in short, is a simple, humorous, clear-cut book that should once and for all clean up the uncertainties surrounding the method and, surprisingly enough, should make it more useful than ever because it makes it intelligently sensible to all.

**THE CRAFT OF COMEDY** by Athene Seyler and Stephen Haggard. 1957, Sec. Ed., Theater Arts Books; 114 pp.

This charming and illuminating little collection of letters between Miss Seyler, one of England's most accomplished comedienne, and the late Mr. Haggard, an aspiring young actor, has been reprinted after more than a decade. It adds a last chapter, "Fans, Trains, and Stays," on the art of doing period comedy, and a new introduction that lists Miss Seyler's three simple technical rules for the good comedy actor: "clear speaking; generous giving of... the 'feed line'; and careful listening." In such simple but clear language Miss Seyler instructs her student: the essentials of comedy acting are "lack of balance, distortion, over-emphasis or under-emphasis, and surprise." Comedy is "a comment on life from outside, an observation of human nature"; that is, whereas a serious role "involves absorption in the character — identification with it, losing one's own self in another's... comedy seems to be the standing outside a character or situation and pointing out one's delight in certain aspects of it." Good comedy acting therefore starts with the truth about a character and life, then slightly distorts aspects of the character in relation to the norm, and finally uses the technique of "appearing to believe in the balance of a thing that one knows is out of balance."

This art of "standing outside" a part is difficult and explains why it is easier to do a serious role than a comic one, for "one needs perspective and a knowledge of human nature before one can place a character in a comic relation to life" — something usually lacking in the young. Few bits of business are in themselves funny; one uses the same business in tragedy as in comedy, except in the latter one employs a lack of proportion for a "truthful exploitation of his material to emphasize the intentions of the author." To do this, an actor must have great confidence in his power to amuse. He must remember that most laughs arise out of a character's quick reaction to another character. And so the provocative ideas tumble out. Almost every page contains some principle that is worth remembering and trying. And, for good measure, there are also often general rules of practice that apply to directing or acting in any kind of drama: for example, "It is well that beginners should overdo everything to start with. One can always pull down a performance, but it is difficult to increase the stature of acting once it has begun on small lines."

**SCENES FOR STUDENT ACTORS**, edited by Frances Cosgrove. Vol. VI, 1958; Samuel French; 106 pp.

Once again Miss Cosgrove has edited a group of scenes from the recent Broadway plays for acting assignments. They represent all types of plays and styles of writing, and the arrangement of the scenes remains the same as in the previous volumes: nine scenes each for one man and for one woman, eight for two men, nine for two women, and eight for one man and one woman. They should save much time for both student and teacher.



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